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RADICAL RIGHT-WING YUGOSLAV INTEGRALIST MOVEMENTS BETWEEN CONSERVATISM AND FASCISM

In modern historiography, there is a wide range of approaches and theoretical assumptions that explain the complex relationship between the ideological constructs of conservatism and fascism. Some authors, such as John Weiss¹ and Eugen Weber,² argue that fascism “borrowed” most of its ideas from the concepts of the conservative right, vulgarizing them and pushing them to radical extremes in practice. Marxist-oriented historians had a similar view, believing that fascism was a natural continuation and (the only possible) outcome of the liberal-capitalist system. On the other hand, other authors, such as James Gregor³ and Zeev Sternhell,⁴ believe that, in the formulation of its ideological construct, fascism actually owes the most to modern far-left political theorists such as Georges Sorel, Vilfredo Pareto, Alceste de Ambris and the like,

¹ John Weiss, *The Fascist Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row 1967).

² Eugen Weber, *Action Francaise: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).

³ James Gregor, *Marxism, Fascism, and Totalitarianism: Chapters in the Intellectual History of Radicalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

⁴ Zeev Sternhell, Mario Sznajder, Maria Asheri, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1994).

pointing to the early political career of “the father of fascism,” Benito Mussolini, and the fact that Sorel cooperated with the French Action (*Action Française*) within the *Cercle Proudhon*. Such a variety of perspectives within modern historiography regarding the relationship between conservatism and fascism is a question still debated in historical scholarship clearly testifying to the significance this topic has in the studies of European political history of the twentieth century. To further clarify this issue, this paper will present the relationship between conservative and fascist ideas within the ideological constructs of the Yugoslav (South Slav) integralist far-right in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia by comparing their attitudes towards the French Revolution and its political legacy, the monarchy, religion and different models for the political and economic system in the state.

The torchbearers of the idea of Yugoslav integralism – the theory that there is one Yugoslav people – became politically active on the eve of World War I in the South Slavic territories of the Habsburg Monarchy, carrying out their activities within the Yugoslav Nationalist Revolutionary Youth (*Jugoslovenska nacionalistička revolucionarna omladina* – JNRO), which used politics and violence to fight for the national and political emancipation of Yugoslav people from the Habsburg rule. In the wake of World War I, in the period 1921–1929, members of the JNRO resumed their activities within the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (*Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista* – ORJUNA), which was created to stand as a bastion of national and state unitarism, guardian of territorial integrity and champion of Yugoslav ethnic groups that found themselves outside the borders of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁵ Under the royal dictatorship (1929–1934), which banned ORJUNA and took over its idea of national and state unitarism, its members from Slovenia continued to be politically active through the Association of Fighters of Yugoslavia (*Boračka organizacija Jugoslavije* – BOJ),⁶ while its members from Serbia and Croatia reunited within the

⁵ Vasilije Dragosavljević, *Ideje fašizma u Kraljevini SHS: Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista (1921–1929)* (Beograd: Medija Centar Odbrana, 2020), 41–43, 102–103.

⁶ Vasilije Dragosavljević, “Association of Fighters of Yugoslavia (1929–1935): Ideology – Practice – Outcome,” *Istraživanja – Journal of Historical Researches* no. 30 (2019): 234–255.



ORJUNA Action Squad,
Bajamonti Fountain
in Split, 1926 (Vasilije
Dragosavljević's private
collection)

Yugoslav Action (*Jugoslovenska akcija* – JA).⁷ The assassination of King Alexander I in Marseilles in 1934 reaffirmed the leadership of the BOJ and the JA movements in their belief that the Yugoslav state was once again at a political turning point, which inspired these groups to unite into the Yugoslav People's Movement ZBOR (*Jugoslovenski narodni pokret Zbor* – ZBOR), the political organization that spearheaded the forces of Yugoslav integration in the final stage of the Yugoslav

⁷ Vasilije Dragosavljević, "Ideje jugoslovenske radikalne desnice u listu *Politički glasnik*," *Srpska politička misao* 65 no. 3 (2019): 367–390.



ORJUNA members from Sarajevo (Vasilije Dragosavljević's private collection)



A Map of Greater Yugoslavia (Newspaper *Jugoslavija*, god. I, br. 14, 1.12.1927.)
(Vasilije Dragosavljević's private collection)

monarchy (1934–1941).⁸ These movements had their ideological foundation in the national myth – the theory of integral Yugoslavism, and their common goal was to create a powerful and unitary (in the national and legal sense of the word) Greater Yugoslavia that would stretch from Szeged to Thessaloniki and from Trieste to Varna, and serve as the well-spring for the final emancipation and affirmation of the South Slavic peoples and their cultural and political achievements.⁹ In two decades, the political forces of Yugoslav integralism went through several forms of organization, maintaining the same basic ideological platform – the theory of integral Yugoslavism, but gradually modifying a number of their basic tenets under the influence of the conflict between right-wing conservative ideas and modern fascist ideas.

Since its creation, ORJUNA had an affirmative attitude towards the political legacy of the French Revolution. In the pre-war years, the ORJUNA leadership gathered within the JNRO, a heterogeneous political organization that brought together ideologically diverse groups of subjects of Austria-Hungary including anarchists, socialists, as well as nationalists, whose only common ground was the idea of Yugoslavism and their hostility to the Habsburg crown. Russian anarchists (Bakunin, Kropotkin) and the Socialist-Revolutionaries, also known as SRs, as well as the Czech socialist thinker Václav Klobuč, heavily influenced the development of political ideas within the JNRO. Some members of the revolutionary youth, such as Juraj Demetrović and Vladimir Čerina, collaborated in socialist-oriented newspapers, while Vladimir Gaćinović, a member of the Young Bosnia revolutionary movement, had ties with Trotsky.¹⁰ True to their ideological orientation, the ideologues of the ORJUNA rejected any invocation of historical tradition¹¹ and interpreted

⁸ Ratko Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije V. Ljotić* (Beograd: Nova iskra, 2001), 27–54.

⁹ Vasilije Dragosavljević, “Irredentist Actions of the Slovenian Organisation of Yugoslav Nationalists (the ORJUNA) in Italy and Austria (1922–1930),” *Contributions to Contemporary History* 59 no. 3. (December 2019): 31–52.

¹⁰ Milorad Emečić, *Stvaranje Jugoslavije 1790–1918*, 2 vols (Beograd: Prosveta, 1989), II, 530–531, 685.

¹¹ Miloš Ković, “Nacionalizam,” in *Srbi 1903–1914: Istorija ideja*, ed. Miloš Ković (Beograd: Clio, 2015), 235–236, 550.

the creation of the Yugoslav state as the Yugoslav revolution, seeing it as an integral part of the French revolution and its political legacy. In that sense, Bogumil Vošnjak went the furthest, describing Napoleon as the creator of the first Yugoslav state (the Illyrian Provinces) and the first champion of the idea of Yugoslavism.¹²

A similar opinion about the French Revolution was espoused by the ideologues of the BOJ. In an article entitled *For Democracy or Against It*,¹³ Janko Ražem emphasized that the tendencies of the fascist regimes to present the political legacy of the French Revolution, that is, parliamentary democracy, as an artificial and outdated concept, were actually attempts to destabilize the very foundations of the European order and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as one of its constituent parts.

In the early years of the movement's existence, the ideologues of the JA took to defending the political achievements of the French Revolution,¹⁴ but after 1932, a number of articles published in the movement's bulletin revealed a tendency to separate the process of Yugoslav unification from the ideological legacy of the French Revolution. Such a tendency was most explicitly manifested in the article entitled *Yugoslav Revolution*,¹⁵ in which Luka Kostrenčić pointed out that the Yugoslav revolution had its own idiosyncratic traits that distinguished it from the principles and practices of the French revolutionaries. According to Kostrenčić, the Yugoslav revolution, unlike the French, was not an act of the urban bourgeoisie but rather a mass movement of the Yugoslav peasantry that stood up against the foreign feudal aristocracy, and, as such, it was a manifestation of the struggle of the Yugoslav peasants against two imperial powers (the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy) that had exploited the South Slavs for centuries. In his article *The Collapse of Liberal Democracy*,¹⁶ Spasoje Madiraca took a decidedly

¹² Bogumil Vošnjak, *Pobeda Jugoslavije: Nacionalne misli i predlozi* (Beograd: Slavija, 1931), 95–102.

¹³ Janko Ražem, "Za demokraciju ili zoper njo," *Prelom*, 29 March 1934.

¹⁴ Anonymous, "U odbranu Jugoslavije," *Jugoslovenska reč*, 6 August 1932; Anonymous, "Francuska i Jugoslavija," *Jugoslovenska reč*, 27 August 1932; Anonymous, "Rat i mir," *Jugoslovenska reč*, 1 October 1932.

¹⁵ Luka Kostrenčić, "Jugoslovenska revolucija," *Jugoslovenska reč*, 16 April 1933.

¹⁶ Spasoje Madiraca, "Slom liberalne demokratije," *Jugoslovenska reč*, 17 April 1934.

negative view of the phenomenon of the French Revolution, pointing out that its main values of freedom, equality and fraternity had lost their appeal in modern society. Contrary to the expectations of the French revolutionaries, instead of becoming a realm of freedom, equality and fraternity, modern European society was now dominated by tribal and religious conflicts and class struggle, which jointly led to the collapse of liberal democracy as a system considered to be the offshoot of the French Revolution.

Its views on the ideological and political legacy of the French Revolution are one of the points in which the ZBOR moved furthest away from the ideological construct of the far-right integral Yugoslav movements from the 1920s and early 1930s. Unlike the leadership of the Yugoslav integralist movements from the previous period, Dimitrije Ljotić, the main ideologist of the ZBOR, was not part of the pre-war JNRO and was influenced by the ideas of the reactionary neo-royalist movement French Action (FA).¹⁷ The ideological influence the FA had in shaping the attitude of the ZBOR towards the phenomenon of the French Revolution and its role in the history of European civilization is most apparent in the article entitled *True Revolution*,¹⁸ in which Ljotić writes:

The troubles of modern society stem from the principle of individualism, based on which, one hundred and fifty years ago, the French revolution definitely established the society. That principle took the human individual as the sovereign measure of all value, forgetting at the same time its relationship to the universe, the nation and the family, forgetting that without the family and the nation, the individual would not be able to survive, overlooking the fact that only when placed in the right relationship to the universe, the individual human being can be properly understood. Having thus turned the order of things upside down, this individualistic principle gave birth to materialism, capitalism and political democracy, and this is how the current materialist-democratic-capitalist society came about.

In the article entitled *Before the Court of History*, Ljotić condemned the French Revolution for “...the defeat and decline of the moral, political and ethical, social and economic systems of protection that every nation

¹⁷ Vasilije Dragosavljević, *Druga Evropa i Kraljevina Jugoslavija: JNP Zbor (1934–1941)* (Novi Sad: Prometej 2021), 72–80, 92–104, 112–121, 136–145.

¹⁸ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Istinska revolucija,” *Otađzbina*, 18 December 1936.



Dimitrije Ljotić in the vicinity of Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1937 (Vasilije Dragosavljević's private collection)

has created over centuries of their previous existence [...] And that is how we, the Christian civilization and Europe in particular, are being bombarded by all the troubles of our times. All of them. Both those within the confines of the country and those that come from outside.”¹⁹

The positive attitude ORJUNA had towards the political legacy of the French Revolution also led to its ambivalent view of the institution of the monarchy. At the first congress of this organization, its prominent ideologist Niko Bartulović stated that the majority of the ORJUNA leadership was republican-oriented but accepted the monarchy as a form of government out of respect for the merits of the Karadjordjević dynasty in the struggle for the creation of the Yugoslav state. Further on in his speech, Bartulović expressed his fear that the very institution of the monarchy was a great danger to the Yugoslav state and its survival, because there was a possibility that tribal-oriented political parties would abuse the dynasty, that is, turn it (by referring to its Serbian origin) into a tool for inciting tribal hatred and separatism.²⁰ The ambivalent attitude towards the institution of the monarchy also continued in the ideology of the JA. In the article entitled *Why We Are Monarchists*,²¹ Luka Kostrenčić openly said that the members of JNRO were republican-oriented and that they could imagine the realization of their political mission only on the ruins of the feudal aristocratic order. Kostrenčić singled out Petar Karadjordjević's engagement in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian

¹⁹ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Pred sudom istorije,” *Naš put*, 11 June 1939.

²⁰ ORJUNA nje cilji in metode: Govor brata Nike Bartulovića na prvem kongresu vseh Orjun dne 1–3. decembra 1923 v Split (Ljubljana: ORJUNA, 1923), 9–10.

²¹ Luka Kostrenčić, “Zašto smo monarhisti,” *Jugoslovenska reč*, 17 December 1932.

uprising of 1875–1878 when the future monarch fought side by side with the deprived peasant serfs (*čifčijas*) against the Bosnian beys, as the key reason that motivated members of the JNRO to renounce their republican beliefs and accept the monarchy. Having proved in word and deed that they felt the socio-economic component of the Yugoslav revolution as their own, the Karađorđević dynasty gained the sympathy of the JNRO, which consequently gave less prominence to its republican concept of state government. The efforts made to integrate the dynasty into the concept ORJUNA had of the national-social character of the Yugoslav revolution is also evident in the ideology of the BOJ. As an example, we can refer to the article *Karadjordje, Fighter for Free Yugoslavia*,²² in which the anonymous author portrayed the leader of the First Serbian Uprising of 1804 and the founder of the Karadjordjević dynasty as a political visionary who, way back in the early nineteenth century, led the Serbian people in the struggle for the creation of the Yugoslav state. In contrast to the Yugoslav integralist movements from the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s, which saw the monarchy as one of the possible forms of state government or even showed certain distrust towards the dynasty's stance in intertribal conflicts, the ZBOR placed monarchism at the very center of its ideological construct. Ljotić's attitude towards the institution of the monarchy was determined by the political teachings of Charles Maurras, whose influence shaped his view of the political events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²³ Analyzing texts published in the ZBOR bulletins, it can be concluded that the monarchist notions espoused by the FA and the ZBOR are almost identical, and, moreover, Ljotić believed that King Alexander Karadjordjević was the epitome of all the qualities that Maurras required his ideal monarch to possess, in that he was a true warrior, statesman and the symbol of the unity of his country. This conclusion is confirmed by Maurras' statement that only in France and Serbia the monarchy and dynasty originated from the people and were identified with the historical sense of nation and the state.²⁴ In the article entitled *Communist Activities*, Ljotić claimed: "Our people

²² Anonymous, "Karadjordje prvoborec za svobodno Jugoslavio," *Prelom*, 22 February 1934.

²³ Dimitrije V. Ljotić, *Odabrana dela I* (Minhen: Iskra, 1981), 286.

²⁴ Bogdan Radica, *Agonija Evrope* (Beograd: Ukronija, 2003), 34–36.

could never exist without the monarchy. Neither our art nor our philosophy can ever imagine a universe without God, a state without a King and a home without a master."²⁵ In his speeches and articles, Ljotić rarely missed an opportunity to emphasize that his family had been serving the Karadjordjević dynasty since the First Serbian Uprising and that the institution of the monarchy represented the ideological bedrock of the ZBOR. In the opinion of his contemporaries, "for him, the king was a sacrosanct being, an embodiment of God's will and God's mercy."²⁶ The ideological significance of the idea of the monarchy (embodied in King Alexander) for the ZBOR can best be seen in the fact that the assassination of King Alexander in Marseille was the trigger for the creation of this movement and that Ljotić declared that its principal task was to continue the struggle for the goals proclaimed by King Alexander before he was murdered.²⁷

Radical anti-clericalism was one of the main characteristics of the ORJUNA's ideology. Its sources can be traced to the close ties between the Roman Catholic Church and the Habsburg Monarchy, as well as the theoretical concept of integral Yugoslavism. The foundations of the anti-clerical ideological stance espoused by ORJUNA were expounded by Prvislav Grisogono in a brochure published in 1923 under the title *Contemporary National Affairs*.²⁸ According to Grisogono, before they embraced Christianity, Serbs and Croats professed the same faith, which greatly contributed to the process of their unification.²⁹ The arrival of Christian missionaries from two centers, Rome and Constantinople, led to a slowdown in the process of the unification of Serbs and Croats into a single Yugoslav nation and the creation of two different confessional and cultural traditions. The ideologues of the ORJUNA claimed that the Roman Catholic Church and Islam were merely tools in the hands of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, which foreign conquerors employed to break the ethnic and political unity of the Yugoslav

²⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Aktivnost komunista," *Bilten*, 29 May 1939.

²⁶ Arhiv Srbije, Beograd, fond BIA, II – 69, *Zbor Dimitrija Vl. Ljotića*, 5.

²⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Povodom smrti jednog heroja," *Otadžbina*, 14 October 1934; Dimitrije Ljotić, "Autoritet," *Otadžbina*, 28 October 1934.

²⁸ Prvislav Grisogono, *Savremena nacionalna pitanja* (Split: ORJUNA, 1923).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

people and divide them into dwarfish ethnic identities more easily assimilated and kept in submission.³⁰ In their revolutionary struggle, exemplified in the wars waged from 1912 to 1918, the Yugoslav people effectively destroyed the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, but their negative influence endured in the creation of political parties that were based on confessional identities and used their ideologies and actions to undermine the unity of the Yugoslav people.³¹ The ideologues of the ORJUNA criticized the Serbian Orthodox Church³² with the aim of portraying the Orthodox clergy as a destructive element that obstructed the implementation of the agrarian reform and thus weakened the social structure of the Yugoslav people. In brief, ORJUNA ideologues criticized Roman Catholicism and Islam for not being national enough, while disapproving of the Orthodox Church for not being social enough. The most explicit in disparaging and lambasting the Church was the ORJUNA ideologue Dobrosav Jevdjević, who condemned the Church for its influence on modern society, calling it a “medieval plague” and comparing it and its pernicious effect on the human soul to syphilis and the harmful effect this sexually transmitted disease has on the human body.³³ In the continuation of the same article, addressing the representatives of the Church, Jevdjević even openly threatened: “Rest assured that we will not hesitate even for a moment to trample you like worms under our feet if your dark thoughts and dark robes stand in the way of the inevitable triumph of our movement, the triumph of the unified Yugoslav nation.”³⁴ Members of the ORJUNA party militia physically attacked the Catholic, Islamic and Orthodox clergy throughout Yugoslavia, desecrated places of worship and intruded on religious festivities and processions.³⁵ The party

³⁰ Anonymous, “Poziv omladine,” *Pobeda*, 28 June 1921.

³¹ Anonymous, “Klerikalizam u Jugoslaviji,” *Pobeda*, 10 April 1925.

³² Anonymous, “Agrarne nevolje vođovđanske sirotinje,” *Vidovdan*, 15 January 1927; Anonymous, “Manastirska imanja,” *Vidovdan*, 15 January 1927; Anonymous, “Čime ćemo zaustaviti moralnu i materijalnu dekadenciju našeg seljaka,” *Vidovdan*, 6 March 1927; Anonymous, “Crkveni feudalizam u Crnoj Gori,” *Jugoslavija* (Belgrade), 22 February 1928.

³³ Dobrosav Jevdjević, *Izabrani članci* (Novi Sad: Slavija, 1925), 40.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁵ It is symptomatic that one of the first violent actions of the newly formed ORJUNA was an attack on a church procession led by members of the Catholic

papers published by the ORJUNA³⁶ made it clear that the ideologues of this movement, just like the French revolutionaries, tended to promote the theory of integral Yugoslavism as a substitute for traditional religions. Members of the ORJUNA strived to turn the ideology of integral Yugoslavism into a pseudo-religious dogma, which is most evident in the passages of the article entitled *The National Creed*, which was conceived as the ORJUNA paradigm modeled on the Nicene Creed in Christianity and reads as follows:

1. just like he believes in one God, [he] believes that the Serb, Croat and Slovene are three brothers in a single Yugoslav nation [...] 5. believes that the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes will remain indivisible forever and ever [...] 9. believes that, in addition to the armed forces in the country, state administration must also rely on the citizens who are aware of what we have and what we could lose [...] Patriots, take this Orjuna Creed as your own [...] and cherish and protect the sacred heroic deed of political liberation and national unification! Raise the holy national flag together with Orjuna to the heavens above and let it shine for future generations as the vigil lamp burning bright to the fallen heroes!³⁷

Similar to the anti-clericalist ideas espoused by the ORJUNA, the leadership of the JA saw the Roman Catholic Church as a negative factor in the unification of the Yugoslav people, representatives of a backward social system (feudalism), instigators of Croatian separatism and a tool in the hands of Fascist Italy. Their negative attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church was summarized in the brochure entitled *Dark International on Croatia and Yugoslavia*,³⁸ in which the author made a series of comments about the negative role of the Roman Catholic Church in the unification of Yugoslav tribes from the tenth century to modern times. Just like the members of the ORJUNA, the ideologues

youth organization in Split in August 1921. For more information on the anti-clerical actions of the ORJUNA party militia, see Dragosavljević, *Ideje fašizma*, 223–229.

³⁶ Anonymous, "Nacionalisti zbijte redove," *Budućnost*, 30 December 1922; Danko Andjelinović, "Pozdravni govor oblasnoj skupštini," *Orjuna* (Ljubljana), 4 March 1923; J. Silobrić, "Naša borba," *Orjuna* (Ljubljana), 25 March 1923.

³⁷ Anonymous, "Nacionalno vjeruju," *Budućnost*, 27 June 1923.

³⁸ Milan Banić, *Crna Internacionala prema hrvatstvu i jugoslavenstvu: Povodom euharistijskog kongresa* (Beograd: Naša sloga, 1930).

of the JA tried to impose the idea of integral Yugoslavism as a kind of substitute for traditional religions. This tendency is apparent in the words of Vladimir Velmar-Janković, who spoke at a JA meeting in Zagreb and said: "I would even go so far as to emphatically call our community a sect, because if what is essential for a sect is lacking [...] and that is idealism and profound faith, we can never be successful in managing our affairs [...] Our Yugoslavism is a faith, not just an agenda or a strategy."³⁹

In general, the ideologues of the BOJ, just like the ORJUNA's, emphasized that religion was interfering with politics and obstructing the constitution of a unified Yugoslav nation, but tried to mitigate their criticism by claiming that the instrumentalization of religion for political purposes had been a common practice among political parties prior to the 6 January Dictatorship, which had no future in Yugoslavia. The articles published in their bulletin abound in analogies with the Christian scriptures. For instance, it was pointed out that "God keeps Yugoslavia safe" (otherwise the country would have collapsed long ago due to poor administration and corruption),⁴⁰ and the introduction of the 6 January Dictatorship and dissolution of political parties were compared to Jesus' driving merchants out from the Temple,⁴¹ while the struggle of the movement for its political ideas was parallel with Christ's temptations.⁴² In addition to using Biblical analogies in their propaganda, the ideologues of the BOJ stated that they were willing to cooperate with the Roman Catholic Church, which was a radical turn in the relations between advocates of the theory of integral Yugoslavism and institutional religions with their communities. In that sense, Avgust Kuster went the furthest and wrote the article entitled *In Critical Times*, in which he elaborated on the causes of the crisis in the Yugoslav society and concluded that one of the key factors in the social crisis lay in the general decline in morale and that, in addition to the struggle for the political and economic revival of the state, it was also necessary to wage a struggle for the moral and spiritual renewal of the nation, in alliance with

³⁹ *Jugoslovenska akcija: Stenografske beleške sa prvog šireg sastanka delegata Jugoslovenske akcije u Zagrebu* (Beograd: Jugoslavija, 1932), 22, 26.

⁴⁰ Anonymous, "Govor tovariša Dimitrija Ljotića," *Prelom*, 25 October 1935.

⁴¹ Anonymous, "Govor tovariša Dimitrija Ljotića," *Prelom*, 19 April 1934.

⁴² Avgust Kuster, "Velika noć," *Prelom*, 18 April 1935.

the Church.⁴³ The struggle for moral renewal based on Christian spiritual values was one of the biggest novelties introduced by the ideologues of the BOJ into the ideological construct of the right-wing oriented integral Yugoslavism.

The negative attitude of the ZBOR towards the pronounced anti-clericalism of the Yugoslav integralists from the 1920s and the early 1930s was most explicitly expressed in the article *Shepherds of the People's Souls*,⁴⁴ in which Ljotić wrote:

The artificial deepening of the gap between the Orthodox and the Catholics was used by the supporters of paganism, which poisoned the cream of our urban intelligentsia [...] so they started announcing that Yugoslavia was supposedly in mortal danger from clericalism, specifically Catholic, because, they say, it has an infernal intention to destroy Yugoslavia [...] Our pagans got scared of that [...] so, being against churches and clericalism, they undertook to mobilize the upper class of the urban intelligentsia, who often have foreign origins, and then they declared themselves to be the only true integral Yugoslavs, denying that honor to any other Slovene, Croat or Serb who is not a member of their coterie.

The ideologues of the ZBOR claimed that it was unfounded to fear the Church and its participation in political life, because messages of peace and tolerance were embedded in all religions in Yugoslavia, and that all confessional conflicts were, in fact, the result of the destructive actions of political parties, which manipulated the religious feelings of their voters for their own interests.⁴⁵ Ljotić believed that (together with folk tradition) the spirit of Christianity was the very bedrock and the starting point from which the development of a unique Yugoslav culture should begin, and ended his presentation with the statement that it was "the destiny of the Yugoslav people to be under the sign of Christ."⁴⁶ In accordance with such a stance, Ljotić vehemently opposed political manifestations of religious sectarianism, advocating the rapprochement of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church,⁴⁷

⁴³ August Kuster, "Na prelomu časa," *Prelom*, 4 January 1934.

⁴⁴ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Pastiri duša narodnih," *Otadžbina*, 16 February 1936.

⁴⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Vera i država," *Otadžbina*, 12 December 1934.

⁴⁶ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Uskršnja razmišljanja," *Otadžbina*, 7 April 1934.

⁴⁷ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Reforma države i plemenski problem," *Otadžbina*, 14 April 1935.

which is why some of his contemporaries described him as a champion of the idea of ecumenism in Yugoslav politics.⁴⁸ Moreover, Ljotić rejected the idea that the ZBOR represented an exclusively Christian movement, stressing that: “[...] it is not closed to other ethically principled people, because there are ethical people outside of Christianity as well. The Koran is an extraordinary book. It should be obligatory reading for every member of our movement.”⁴⁹ As one of the cornerstones of the ideology of the ZBOR, clericalism decisively influenced the movement’s position in foreign policy. The expansion of Nazi Germany and the collapse of the European order based on the Versailles Treaty were interpreted as a direct consequence of the decline of piety and religion in Europe, which was most explicitly manifested in Ljotić’s comment: “Europe wanted morality without Christ and without God – and it got Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, who are its doings – God’s punishment for European faithlessness.”⁵⁰ The importance of clericalism in the establishment of the essential tenets of the ideology of the ZBOR was eloquently summed up in a comment by a contemporary about the character of the movement: “[...] whoever wants to properly analyze their history must think about them practically as a religious sect, which requires him to have just about the same level of knowledge about theological prejudices that Anatole France possessed when he explained, criticized and condemned the French ultramontanists.”⁵¹

Presenting themselves as the successors to the JNRO, which was both a nationally and socially revolutionary organization, members of the ORJUNA admitted that in the first years after the war they had neglected the struggle for social justice and the social-revolutionary aspect of their ideology in the name of the stability of the new state.⁵² Striving to keep the social-revolutionary ideological legacy of the JNRO alive, the ideologues of ORJUNA professed that solving social issues was one of

⁴⁸ Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije V. Ljotić*, 12.

⁴⁹ Hrvoje Magazinović, *Kroz jedno mučno stoljeće* (Valjevo: Valjevo print, 2009), 95–96.

⁵⁰ Dimitrije Ljotić, “Napad na Holandiju i Belgiju,” *Bilten*, 12 May 1940, 1–4.

⁵¹ Arhiv Srbije, fond BIA, II – 69, *Zbor Dimitrija Vl. Ljotića*, 13–14.

⁵² Anonymous, “Oslobođenje bez revolucije,” *Pobeda*, 1 December 1921.

the primary tasks for their movement.⁵³ Accordingly, ORJUNA advocated the creation of a public fund for workers' insurance in case of exhaustion or old age and harshly criticized employers who misused the social insurance of their employees by falsely reporting their wages.⁵⁴ In 1922–1923, ORJUNA established its workers' sections, which included trade unions and workers' cooperatives. The main goal of the ORJUNA "national trade unions" was to fight against foreign capital and communist propaganda among the working classes.⁵⁵ Socialist renegades Ivan Bornemisa and Juraj Demetrović, comrades-in-arms of ORJUNA from the days of JNRO, played a key role in winning over workers to join the ORJUNA trade unions.⁵⁶ Apart from the support of Croatian industrial workers, ORJUNA was most successful among service workers, seafarers and miners in Slovenia, Vojvodina and Dalmatia. Helped by its trade union organizations, ORJUNA organized strikes⁵⁷, boycotts and sabotage actions,⁵⁸ as well as violent protests, putting pressure on the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, tribalist-separatist political parties, representatives of foreign capital and the regime itself.⁵⁹ In the feuilleton entitled *Yugoslavia in the Summer of 19..!* the anonymous author presented ORJUNA's plan to reorganize the Yugoslav state into a "trade union-parliamentary" hereditary monarchy which would be ruled by the King, the Senate and the National Assembly. Half of the membership of the Senate would be elected, while the other half (with a lifetime mandate) would be appointed by the King from candidates proposed by universities, scientific institutions, as well as trade, craft, and agricultur-

⁵³ Anonymous, "Ne zbunjajte nas," *Vidovdan*, 24 April 1923; Anonymous, "Nacionaliste prema jugoslovenskim radnicima," *Budućnost*, 3 February 1923.

⁵⁴ Anonymous, "Radnici i poslodavci," *Jugoslavija* (Skopje), 11 February 1927.

⁵⁵ Robert Čop, "ORJUNA: Prototip političke organizacije" (BA thesis, University of Ljubljana, 2006), 75.

⁵⁶ Niko Bartulović, *Od revolucionarne omladine do ORJUNE: Istorijat jugoslovenskog omladinskog pokreta* (Split: Orjuna 1925), 49.

⁵⁷ Anonymous, "Obustava rada pomoraca," *Orjuna* (Zagreb), 27 June 1923.

⁵⁸ Darko Friš, "Aktivnosti mestnega odbora ORJUNE v Mariboru v prvem letu delovanja," *Studia Historica Slovenica* 4, no. 2/3 (2004): 508.

⁵⁹ Anonymous, "U borbi protiv mračnjaka i nepoštenja," *Vidovdan*, 25 January 1923; Anonymous, "Oslobođenje g. Jevđevića," *Vidovdan*, 25 January 1923.

al corporations and cooperatives. Half of the deputies to the National Assembly would be elected in general elections, while the other half of the candidates would be elected from a list proposed by members of labor, artisan and agricultural trade unions.⁶⁰ This form of state organization largely corresponded with the constitutional changes implemented by Mussolini in the 1920s, when he transformed the Italian parliament from a political into a corporate representative body. ORJUNA failed to successfully repeat the achievement of the Apennine role model because of its negative attitude towards the most numerous segment of the Yugoslav working class – agricultural labor force. ORJUNA's lack of interest in the problems of the Yugoslav peasantry was partly the result of the leadership's opinion that the countryside represented a political bastion of tribal separatist and class-oriented parties, and partly a consequence of the elitist attitude of ORJUNA, a movement of the urban intelligentsia, towards the peasantry, which (as members of the ORJUNA believed, because of their poor education⁶¹) remained loyal to parties with a national-religious prefix. The intellectual-elitist attitude of the ideologues of ORJUNA towards the peasantry was most explicitly formulated in the words of Niko Bartulović: "We all share the radical opinion that the progress and interests of our Nation cannot wait until the majority of backward peasants realize that it is better to vote in the elections and to cast a ballot in the ballot box of Yugoslav nationalists and not in the box of Stjepan Radić... or Anton Korošec,"⁶² which made it impossible for ORJUNA to win over agricultural workers, who made up more than 80% of the population of the country, thus condemning them to the fringes of political life.

The ideologues of the JA continued to advocate for the introduction of a corporate system organized according to the Italian model,⁶³ but unlike the ORJUNA, being strongly influenced by ideas of German National Socialism, they held that agriculture was the bedrock of the national economy and that, as such, it must be the basis of the Yugoslav planned economy, while industrial and urban workforce must adapt

⁶⁰ Anonymous, "Jugoslavija leta 19..!," *Orjuna* (Ljubljana), 28 May 1927.

⁶¹ Anonymous, "Seljaci i naša inteligencija," *Vidovdan*, 28 February 1926.

⁶² *Orjuna nje cilji in metode*, 4.

⁶³ Dragosavljević, *Druga Evropa i Kraljevina Jugoslavija*, 143–145.

to it.⁶⁴ The establishment of a harmonious economic balance between the rural and the urban environments was highlighted as a priority in the economic strategy adopted by the JA, which was to be achieved by means of state interventionism.⁶⁵ This radical reorientation was both the result of their wish to avoid the political mistakes of their predecessors from the ORJUNA and the consequence of the ideological influences of German National Socialism, and lastly, the ambition to attract the membership of the large agrarian parties dissolved after the introduction of the royal dictatorship in 1929. The ideologues of the JA argued that the only way for the Yugoslav economy to reach its full potential was to reorganize agriculture on a cooperative basis.⁶⁶ Accordingly, the JA initiated the process of economic organization of the peasantry through cooperatives and trade unions.⁶⁷ As the ideologues of the movement envisioned it, these economic organizations were supposed to serve as instruments for a comprehensive reform of the society and the state system.⁶⁸ Peasant cooperatives and trade unions were supposed to find their political voice through the candidacy of representatives for the economic parliament, which would serve, together with the political parliament, as the foundation of the new political system of Yugoslavia.⁶⁹

Similar to the JA, the ideologues of the BOJ made a sharp turn in social policy compared to the ORJUNA, focusing their propaganda activities on the Yugoslav countryside. They emphasized that the peasantry made the greatest contribution to the war efforts for the creation and

⁶⁴ Vasilije Dragosavljević, "Ideološki uticaji evropskog fašizma na jugoslovenske integralističke pokrete radikalne desnice u međuratnom periodu (1921–1941)" (PhD diss., University of Belgrade, 2018), 289–295.

⁶⁵ V. Kuprešanin, "Jugoslovenska akcija i naš zemljoradnik," *Jugoslovenska reč*, 6 January 1934.

⁶⁶ Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb, fond Građanske stranke i društva – Grupa VI, Document No. 3970.

⁶⁷ V. Kuprešanin, "Socijalna kultura ili politička akcija," *Jugoslovenska reč*, 6 November 1933.

⁶⁸ V. Kuprešanin, "Jugoslovenska akcija i naš zemljoradnik," *Jugoslovenska reč*, 6 January 1934.

⁶⁹ Velibor Jonić, "Zašto smo sindikalisti," *Jugoslovenska reč*, 6 November 1933.

defense of the Yugoslav state.⁷⁰ Accordingly, the ideologues of the BOJ stressed that the peasantry and its economic interests and cultural needs must become the foundation of public policy and economy.⁷¹ They were not alone in proposing alternatives to the existing political and economic order. Proposed solutions ranged from state interventionism based on the model established by Roosevelt in the USA⁷² to an economic policy based on the postulates of the cooperative movement to the introduction of corporatism designed on the Italian model.⁷³

Unlike the ideologues of ORJUNA, JA and BOJ, who relied on the instruments patented by Italian fascism, that is, syndicalism and corporatism, in conceiving their socio-economic system, the ideologues of the ZBOR looked for inspiration in the conservative ideology of the FA, which advocated the restoration of the class system. Starting from Maurras's idea of restoring historical institutions, Ljotić wrote his articles *Classes and Zbor*⁷⁴ and *Origins of our Basic Principles*,⁷⁵ in which he argued that the social order in the Yugoslav state had certain specific traits that distinguished it from the social order of other countries. According to Ljotić, the social order of the Yugoslav people had for centuries rested on the institution of the family cooperative, which was the dominant form of social organization even in modern Yugoslav villages. According to Ljotić, the family cooperative, as an autochthonous Yugoslav institution, was grounded on the authority of the master of the household, the solidarity of its members and a strictly defined division of labor among them. These specificities of the Yugoslav society meant that all forms of social organization existing in the system of parliamentary democracy and liberal capitalism, based on the principles of anti-authoritarianism, ruthless competition and the dictates of the market, were alien to the

⁷⁰ Ferdinand Kafol, "Kmetje boric na plan," *Prelom*, 18 January 1934; Anonymous, "Ustanovna seja Banovinskog odbora Boja," *Prelom*, 1 February 1934; Anonymous, "Kmetским борцем за своје правце," *Prelom*, 8 February 1934; Anonymous, "Boj za staro pravdo," *Prelom*, 7 March 1935.

⁷¹ Anonymous, "Temeljna načela," *Prelom*, 13 December 1934.

⁷² Anonymous, "Zakaj je Rozvelt zmagal," *Prelom*, 13 December 1934.

⁷³ Anonymous, "Celjski zbor," *Prelom*, 17 May 1934.

⁷⁴ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Staleži i Zbor," *Otađzbina*, 29 December 1935.

⁷⁵ Dimitrije Ljotić, "Izvori naših osnovnih načela," *Otađzbina*, 22 March 1936.

traditions of the Yugoslav people. According to Ljotić, the incongruity between the people's traditional way of life and imported ideas of foreign origin (democracy and capitalism) was the main reason for the difficult situation of the Yugoslav political and economic system. Therefore, as the only way out of the political and economic crisis (which marked the Yugoslav state since its foundation), Ljotić recommended going back to popular traditions, that is, setting the family cooperative as the exemplary model for organizing the Yugoslav state and society. To achieve this, it was necessary to reject democracy, parliamentarism and liberal capitalism and to install the so-called class system in which the population would be politically organized based on their professions (e.g. peasant class, artisan class, etc.), while economic life and its dynamics should be based on the postulates of the family cooperative (which was already partially revived in the Yugoslav cooperative movement). The ideas expounded in some of the articles⁷⁶ published in ZBOR's bulletin are evidence that the concept of a class-based state envisioned by Ljotić was influenced not only by Maurras' idea of restoration of historical institutions, but also by Salazar's Christian-Corporate Republic *Estado Nuovo*, whose Constitution from 1933 was quite close to the position on the class state advocated by the ZBOR. Just like Salazar, Ljotić wanted to use existing professional, class and cultural organizations, such as peasant cooperatives and charitable, religious and cultural organizations as bodies that would nominate candidates for deputies to the National Assembly who would be elected by secret ballot in general elections.⁷⁷

Looking at the relationship between conservative and fascist ideas within the ideological constructs of Yugoslav integralist right-wing movements through the study of the process of transformation of their attitudes towards the French Revolution and its political legacy, the

⁷⁶ Anonymous, "Staleško državno uređenje u Portugaliji," *Otadžbina*, 12 January 1936; Dimitrije Ljotić, "Zadruugarstvo u staleškoj državi," *Otadžbina*, 23 February 1936; Dimitrije Ljotić, "Samouništenje Španije," *Otadžbina*, 20 August 1936.

⁷⁷ Ljotić, *Odabrana dela I*, 395–398; For more detailed information on the political and economic conceptions of ZBOR, see Dragosavljević, *Ideološki uticaji*, 473–475; Rastko Lompar, "Dimitrije Ljotić and Zbor's Corporatist Project for Interwar Yugoslavia," in *An Authoritarian Third Way in the Era of Fascism: Diffusion, Models and Interactions in Europe and Latin America*, ed. António Costa Pinto (London: Routledge, 2021), 122–136.

monarchy, religion and different models for the economic and political system of the state, we can conclude that this process meant moving away from modern fascist ideas based on the ideological constructs of Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, their gradual revision and eventually their complete travesty, leading to a predominance of conservative ideas based on the ideology of the reactionary neo-royalist movement French Action. Such a shift implied a significant deviation from current trends among European right-wing movements that had, starting from the mid-1930s, predominantly come under the influence of Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, the two ideologically most elaborate and politically most distinguished fascist movements, whereas Salazar's regime in Portugal and the regime of the Fatherland Front (*Vaterländische Front*) in Austria were the only remaining strongholds of the ideological influence of French neo-royalists. Such an atypical transformation of the ideological attitudes of the Yugoslav integralist right from a modern fascist to a conservative reactionary ideology was the result of the strong influence of the political legacy of the Habsburg Monarchy, reception of ideas from abroad, different socio-economic circumstances and diversified cultural influences in different regions of Yugoslavia, radical changes in domestic politics and, lastly, personal preferences of prominent ideologues of these movements.

The irreconcilable hostility of the members of the JNRO towards the Habsburg Monarchy and the fact that socialist and anarchist ideas were present in their ranks strongly shaped the ideology of the ORJUNA, tilting it towards glorifying the French Revolution and its political legacy, distrust of monarchy, negative attitude towards religion, and an attempt to organize the economic and political life in Yugoslavia based on the fascist trade unionism. During the 1930s, the influence of the Habsburg Monarchy and its political legacy began to weaken because the center of the Yugoslav integralist movements moved from the former Habsburg territories (Dalmatia, Croatia and Slovenia), where the greatest number of members of ORJUNA, JA and BOJ came from, to the territory of pre-war Serbia and the regions that gravitated towards it, where the greatest number of members and ideologues of the ZBOR were recruited. Different geographical origins outlined the diversified cultural influences that the leaderships and the members of the Yugoslav integralist movements were exposed to. Whereas the political elite of the

Yugoslav peoples from the Habsburg Monarchy – the future leadership of ORJUNA, JA and BOJ – acquired their education and had their first political experiences within Austria-Hungary, the political elite of pre-war Serbia was sent primarily to France. The influence of French political culture on the process of ideological transformation of the Yugoslav integralist right manifested itself as a strong influence of the ideology of the French Action on the articulation of the basic tenets of the ideological construct of the ZBOR.

In addition, the ideas that came from abroad influenced the process of shaping the ideology of the Yugoslav integralist right, which was most apparent in the fact that the model of fascist corporatism was adopted in the ideology of ORJUNA – it was an uncritical import that based the entire organization of the movement on city workers, a social group that made up only 3 percent of the population of Yugoslavia. The ideologues of the JA tried to correct the mistake of their predecessors by focusing their propaganda on the peasantry, which made up over 80 percent of the population of Yugoslavia, while relying on the ideas and rhetoric of German National Socialism. The role of specific socio-cultural circumstances in certain regions of Yugoslavia is evident in the cases of BOJ and ZBOR, whose leaders, recognizing the strength of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Serbia, significantly softened ORJUNA's anti-clerical rhetoric and tried to present and use religion as a constructive element for Yugoslav unification. By the same token, ZBOR abandoned the reticent attitude towards the monarchy that was characteristic of the ideology of ORJUNA, JA and BOJ, and placed it at the very center of its ideological construct, reflecting the Serbian political tradition.

Radical changes in domestic politics also played an important role in the process of transformation of the basic ideological premises of the Yugoslav integralist right. The royal dictatorship inaugurated in 1929 set national unitarism as an axiom of state politics, whereby the theory of integral Yugoslavism lost its revolutionary potential, having been transformed from an avant-garde theory into the foundation of the state order. The dictatorial regime banned all political parties whose national, regional, or confessional character deviated from the imposed unitarian principle and thus opened the possibility for the Yugoslav integralist right to expand its influence among the wider agrarian masses

who were left without their traditional political organizations. Using the ideological turn of the regime and the political vacuum created by the ban of political parties, the forces of the Yugoslav integralist right turned to promoting their ideology among conservatively oriented classes in a pre-industrial society, that is, peasants, handicraftsmen, and small traders, whereby their ideology started to lose its revolutionary strength and acquire a progressively conservative character. This tendency was most explicitly manifested in the critique of the political legacy of the French Revolution in the ideology of the JA, as well as the softening of anti-clerical attitudes and turning to the conservative masses of the peasantry in the ideology of the BOJ. This was even more evident in the case of ZBOR, whose ideological construct strongly relied on a much more conservative concept of European fascism embodied in the French Action and political movements that gravitated towards it.

The role of individuals and their personal preferences in the transformation of the political attitudes of the Yugoslav integralist right was most pronounced in the case of ZBOR and its main ideologue Dimitrije Ljotić. Unlike the leadership of the ORJUNA, JA and BOJ, Ljotić did not belong to the JNRO; instead, he came from a traditional monarchist family that had been in the service of the Serbian dynasty ever since the First Serbian Uprising and was actively involved in church life and the agricultural cooperative movement, while his political thought was most influenced by the reactionary neo-royalist movement French Action. Under his intellectual influence, the forces of the Yugoslav integralist right bore a strong stamp of conservatism, which was manifested in their strong criticism of the legacies of the French Revolution, glorification of the monarchy and the church and an endeavor to establish political and economic life in Yugoslavia based on the renewal of class and the tradition of rural agricultural cooperatives.

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